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WASHINGTON--THE CONGRESSMEN COULD ALMOST FEEL THE MONEY IN THEIR POCKETS.

UP FOR HOUSE CONSIDERATION WAS A BILL TO RAISE THE PAY OF 1.7 MILLION FEDERAL EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING THE CONGRESSMEN THEMSELVES.

GOVERNMENT CLERKS WOULD HAVE GOTTEN PAY BOOSTS OF \$450 A YEAR. THE LAWMAKERS, SUPREME COURT JUSTICES AND CABINET OFFICIALS WOULD HAVE GOTTEN \$10,000 MORE A YEAR.

CRITICS SAID THE LEGISLATORS COULDN'T HAVE PICKED A WORSE TIME TO INCREASE FEDERAL SALARIES. CONGRESS, ONLY A FEW WEEKS AGO, HAD MADE A FIRM PLEDGE TO WORK AND VOTE FOR ECONOMY--EVERY POSSIBLE MOMENT. THE PROMISE WAS MADE IN PASSING THE \$11.5 BILLION TAX CUT BILL.

THE CRITICS ALSO ARGUED THAT THE GOVERNMENT ALREADY WAS RUNNING IN THE RED AND WOULD HAVE TO BORROW MORE MONEY TO PAY FOR THE PAY INCREASE. NOTED IN ADDITION WAS THAT PRESIDENT JOHNSON HAD APPEALED FOR WAGE AND PRICE RESTRAINTS GENERALLY TO AVOID INFLATION.

THE GUIDELINES SET IN THE PRESIDENT'S JANUARY ECONOMIC REPORT WOULD RESTRICT GENERAL WAGE INCREASES TO ABOUT THREE PER CENT. THE PROPOSED PAY HIKE FOR THE LAWMAKERS WAS 45 PER CENT.

THE RANK AND FILE OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES, OPPONENTS POINT OUT, HAD JUST HAD A RAISE OF BETTER THAN FOUR PER CENT WHICH WENT INTO EFFECT IN JANUARY. THE LAST PAY INCREASE THE LAWMAKERS VOTED THEMSELVES WAS IN 1955.

SUPPORTERS OF THE BILL ARGUED THAT THEY WERE LIVING UP TO THE ECONOMY PLEDGE. THEY PACKED THE MEASURE WITH FRINGE BENEFITS COSTING \$12 MILLION AND PROMPTLY TOOK THEM OUT ON THE FLOOR SO THAT THEY COULD SHOW HOW ECONOMICAL THEY WERE.

THEY HAD INSISTED THAT IN THE LONG RUN THEY WOULD SAVE THE TAXPAYERS \$175 MILLION A YEAR BY ABANDONING WHAT THEY CALLED THE "SHOOTGUN" METHOD OF APPROVING PAY RAISES "UNDER PRESSURE AND EMOTION."

THE GALLERIES, INCIDENTALLY, WERE FILLED WITH LOBBYISTS WORKING FOR THE BILL.

AT THE FINAL VOTE NEAR SUPPORTERS WERE ABLE TO FEND OFF ATTACKS IN VOTE AFTER VOTE. BUT ALL THE VICTORIES WERE BY VOICE VOTE. THAT MEANT THAT NO RECORD WAS KEPT OF HOW EACH INDIVIDUAL LAWMAKER VOTED. HENCE POLITICAL OPPONENTS AND CONSTITUENTS WOULD HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING WHICH CONGRESSMEN VOTED FOR HIGHER PAY AND WHICH VOTED AGAINST.

IN THE FINAL SHOWDOWN, OPPONENTS INSISTED UPON A ROLL CALL VOTE WHICH PUTS ALL MEMBERS ON PUBLIC RECORD.

THE BILL WAS DEFEATED EASILY, 222 TO 134.

ALL MAY NOT BE LOST, HOWEVER. SENATE GOP LEADER EVERETT M. DIRKSEN, ILL., SAID HE WOULD REVIVE THE ENTIRE BILL AND INCLUDE THE CONGRESSIONAL PAY RAISE. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THE HOUSE WOULD ACCEPT IT IF THE SENATE APPROVED IT AND THE ISSUE CAME BEFORE THE HOUSE IN A CONFERENCE REPORT. IN THAT FORM, DIRKSEN SAID, "THEY WON'T HAVE TO VOTE ON IT ON A ROLL CALL."

DIRKSEN MAY NOT BE RECKONING WITH REP. HAROLD R. GROSS, R-IOWA, WHO SAID ECONOMY IS WHAT HE WANTED. HE SAID HE WOULD VOTE AGAINST THE BILL.

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